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C O N F I D E N T I A L DUSHANBE 001776

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/CACEN, EUR/ACE, EUR/PPD, SA, DRL
ALMATY FOR USAID

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/4/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [KPAO](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN: REQUEST FOR GUIDANCE - BILATERAL INFORMATION
AGREEMENT

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard E. Hoagland, Ambassador, EXEC, Embassy
Dushanbe.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (U) Request for guidance. See para five below.

[1](#)2. (C) In November 2003, President Rahmonov told the Ambassador he wanted to be able to broadcast a wider variety of news and opinion on Tajik State TV than simply Russia-generated material.

The Embassy offered access to VOA-TV Russian-language broadcasts. After many months of preparation, IBB in Prague sent the required receiving equipment to Dushanbe for installation at Tajik State TV. After months of equivocation, the Government of Tajikistan informed the Embassy that such broadcasts would be impossible unless the United States and Tajikistan completed and Bilateral Information Agreement. We said we would look into it.

[1](#)3. (C) The U.S. NGO Internews is finding it increasingly hard to fulfill its obligations to USAID and DRL grants in Tajikistan because of restrictive licensing laws and regulations for broadcast outlets and sources of production. On October 26, Internews Country Director in Tajikistan, Troy Etulain, wrote to the Ambassador and suggested that Internews' roadblocks might be removed if the United States concluded a Bilateral Information Agreement (text of letter faxed to EUR/CACEN). In fact, we doubt such a bilateral agreement would solve Internews' problems, because the fundamental issue is Tajikistan's strict control of its information space subsequent to "color revolutions" in Tbilisi, Kiev, and Bishkek, and prior to the late 2006 presidential election.

[1](#)4. (C) In our opinion, a Bilateral Information Agreement would open a Pandora's Box for at least two reasons. 1) The Government of Tajikistan would view such an agreement as a "legal document." In the ex-Soviet mindset prevalent here, the view is always "what is not explicitly permitted is always prohibited." Thus, we would be setting ourselves up for the inevitable niggling legalisms that governments like this one use for control. 2) We are aware that the Government of Tajikistan would want an agreement on the model of their Russia-Tajikistan agreement, which, in theory, requires the mutual broadcast of each party's material. This, of course, is impossible for the United States.

[1](#)5. (C) GUIDANCE REQUEST: We don't want to jump to conclusions and miss any possible chance to solve problems and advance the President's and Secretary's democracy agenda. Therefore, Embassy Dushanbe requests Department of State guidance on the advisability of beginning negotiation for a Bilateral Information Agreement. Should the Department's reply be positive, Embassy Dushanbe would appreciate a suggested negotiating text so that we can control the process from the beginning.

HOAGLAND

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